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ABSTRACT

A rationale and suggestions for teaching 12th grade sociology using Ray Bradbury's novel "The Martian Chronicles" are presented. The conceptual material found in a high school sociology textbook is not always exciting and stimulating to read, but with a science fiction work that supplements this conceptual material, the motivation for learning can increase. The story "Ylla" can be used as a motivational technique as part of a unit on race-ethnic relations. The story contains the three dominant race-ethnic themes: alien, inferior race, and minority figure. "Ylla" makes a poignant commentary on the question of race-ethnic relations from the perspective of what they may be on another world. Students will be attracted to this story because of their interest in outer space and because the story allows them to become involved in reaching solutions to the problems faced by these space-age characters. Possible discussion and testing questions that a teacher could use to motivate students are suggested. (RM)

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TEACHING RACE-ETHNIC RELATIONS THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION IN SENIOR HIGH SOCIAL STUDIES

by

H. L. Prosser

A Seminar Paper
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Motivating students in the classroom became a key theme in the 1970's, and the search for approaches to overcome a lack of motivation continues to the present. The approaches to motivating students are numerous, and at best are subjective and open to interpretation. Because approaches to motivating students involve the cognitive and affective domains, conflicts emerge between groups with opposing viewpoints. One approach to motivating students is the use of science fiction in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

A lack of motivation in high school students is a serious concern facing public school education. In particular, students in secondary social studies.

Purpose of the Study

There are many classroom techniques that advocate possible solutions or cures to the lack of student motivation. The purpose of the study is to develop a rationale for teaching twelfth grade sociology using Ray Bradbury's novel, The Martian Chronicles, as a supplement to

the traditional sociology textbook. The story, "Ylla," will be used as a motivational technique as part of a unit on race-ethnic relations.

Theoretical Development

Since the 1970's, there is a growing body of research that suggests secondary students lack motivation in the classroom. This study makes the following assumptions:

(1) There are no set answers or formulas available for motivating students in the classrooms, only suggestions for techniques.

(2) For the purpose of this paper, analysis will center on the lack of motivation found in secondary social studies; in particular, twelfth grade sociology.

(3) Science fiction is an acceptable form of literature to use in teaching secondary social studies or as supplemental material to the traditional textbooks.

(4) The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury is acceptable for social studies students because it contains no explicit sex, violence or foul language.

Definition of Terms

(1) Science Fiction - a twentieth century literary genre possessing plausibility and at least some allegiance to the attitudes of modern science. It contains many serious works including Isaac Asimov's The Foundation Trilogy, Arthur C. Clark's 2001: A Space Odyssey, Robert Bloch's The Best of Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles, and Robert A. Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land.

(2) Secondary Level - an educationally accepted placement design, signifying grades 7-12.

(3) Social Studies - an educational curriculum covering the subjects of history, sociology, geography, political science, economics, anthropology, psychology, religion, and philosophy.

Chapter 2

MOTIVATING STUDENTS IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Motivating students in the classroom became a key theme in the social studies curriculum during the 1970's, and the search for approaches to overcome a lack of motivation continues to the present. Educators see social studies as having several different approaches to curriculum and instruction, and through case studies, address the questions of curriculum, teacher's views, classroom practices, with motivation as an underlying concern.[1] Yet, motivation remains the teacher's responsibility, and as some point out, "The reports remind us emphatically that the teacher is the key to what social studies will be for any subject."[2] In the project, "Social Studies/Social Science Education: Priorities, Practices, and Needs," the emphasis is on social studies teaching, styles of teaching, textbooks, and techniques, but at the core of this project is concern for motivation.[3] One approach to motivating students is the use of science fiction in

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[1]James P. Shaver, O. L. Davis, Jr., and Suzanne W. Helburn, "The Status of Social Studies Education: Impressions from Three NSF Studies," Social Education. 43 (February, 1979), pp. 150-153.

[2]p. 151.

[3]Douglas P. Superka, Sharryl Hawke, and Irving Morrissett, "The Current and Future Status of the Social Studies," Social Education. 44 (May, 1980), pp. 362-369.

the classroom. As Daniel Roselle, editor for the National Council for the Social Studies, points out:

> For years, social studies teachers have been asking for some approach that would bring new life to their courses. For years, social studies students have been asking for some material that would make their classes exciting and stimulating. Science fiction will answer both their requests.[4]

Science fiction critic and writer, Robert Bloch, also makes a revealing comment on high school student motivation for reading science fiction:

> High school student motivation for reading science fiction and Bradbury both seems to me to spring from a desire to escape reality — a simple, obvious answer which, because it is just that, satisfies no one. But that was my motive fifty years ago, and judging from what I see of current fans, there appears to be little change. Adolescence is a trap we all longed to be freed from.[5]

The statements of Roselle and Bloch indicate that this imaginative genre fascinates secondary school students with its stories and stimulates their interest. The first major effort to utilize science fiction in the social studies classroom appears in 1973.[6] Social studies teachers are among the first to realize its potential as a teaching tool for students in the social studies; they advocate its use as a motivational approach in the teaching of social studies

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[4]Daniel Roselle, "Teaching About World History Through Science Fiction," Social Education. 37 (February, 1973), p. 95.

[5]Letter to author from Robert Bloch, May 10, 1982.

[6]Bernard C. Hollister and Deane C. Thompson, Grokking the Future: Science Fiction is the Classroom (Dayton: Pflaum/Standard, 1973).

subjects.[7] During the 1970's, science fiction, along with traditional textbooks, had been successfully integrated into the social studies curriculum to motivate students.

Science fiction anthologies continue to be adapted to the social studies curriculum. American government, American history, anthropology, civics and social problems, political science, psychology, sociology, and world history are examples of subjects currently studied in this manner. (See Appendix A).

As an integral part of the social studies curriculum, sociology requires more attention in regard to the selection of an adequate science fiction work that will adapt well to subjects taught in a twelfth grade sociology class. The conceptual material found in a high school sociology textbook is not always exciting and stimulating to read, but with a science fiction work that supplements this conceptual material the motivation for learning can increase. In a typical twelfth grade sociology class covering such topics as race-ethnic relations, social psychology, social deviance, religion, and social philosophy, one possible approach to stimulate interest and motivation is to use Ray Bradbury's novel, The Martian Chronicles.[8] This novel will serve as supplemental material and would be especially valuable in the teaching of race-ethnic relations.

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[7]Bernard C. Hollister, "Teaching American History with Science Fiction," Social Education. 39 (February, 1975), pp. 81-86; Chester B. Rogers, "Science Fiction and Social Studies," Social Studies. 66 (November/December, 1975), pp. 261-264.

[8]Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles (New York: Bantam, 1974.

Chapter 3

RAY BRADBURY AND THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

Of the many writers of science fiction, Bradbury, and Bradbury alone, is a lay sociologist and social critic; consequently, since The Martian Chronicles synthesizes these views, it is logical to select this novel for use in a twelfth grade sociology class. As a science fiction writer, Bradbury has also managed to capture a wide reading audience of all ages. His books continue to remain popular, easily accessible and continuously in print. His audience is international in scope since he deals with universal themes and his books continue to pass the critical test of time. His four major books, The Martian Chronicles, Fahrenheit 451, Something Wicked This Way Comes, and The Illustrated Man are considered by critics to be modern masterpieces, and his status as one of America's most important authors has long been established and continues to grow. (See Appendix B).

It is relevant to note that Bradbury, like many science fiction writers, is a moral writer, and his works, like Chronicles, reflect a pragmatic idealist at work, seeking to create a positive, moral reconstruction of society in an effort to secure its survival. The key to understanding his moral concepts of good and evil is found in the latter chapters of his children's novel, Something Wicked This Way Comes; these concepts appear throughout his writings in one form or another. (See Appendix C).

Chronicles appears simple on the surface, but on studying it carefully, the reader finds there is much lurking beneath its smooth surface. The book contains twenty-six stories, divided into three sections that evenly split the work into an intricate chronological order. The first section deals with the initial attempts to successfully establish a stronghold on Mars by earthlings. The second section covers the rise and fall of the Mars colony, and the third section contains the poignant stories concerning the possible regeneration and spiritual rebirth of humankind following nuclear war on Earth.

Stories from these sections lend themselves to various topics taught in a twelfth grade sociology class and can serve as motivational tools for learning. A sociology teacher might want to consider these stories on an individual basis, applying them to various topics as they come up during the course of a semester. The story, "The Taxpayer," for instance, could fit into a topic dealing with social psychology. "There Will Come Soft Rains" could fit into a topic dealing with family, "Usher II" could fit into social deviance, "The Million-Year Picnic" for religion, "The Martian" for social philosophy, and "Ylla" for race-ethnic relations. These are but a few selections. It is up to the individual sociology teacher to apply these stories as he interprets them, and to apply them to his lesson plans accordingly.

Each sociology teacher will approach the stories differently for the purposes of implementation as motivational tools. For the purpose of this paper, "Ylla," as a motivational tool for students learning about race-ethnic relations, will receive emphasis as a possible approach.

Chapter 4

"YLLA" AND RACE-ETHNIC RELATIONS

Whether the discussion in class centers around official and unofficial governmental policy toward minority groups, or individual treatment of a member of a minority group, the fact remains that minority studies is one of the most significant areas in sociology. Race-ethnic relations is an emphasis that requires constant attention and scrutiny in people's lives if there is to be harmony and understanding among groups with varying backgrounds. "Ylla" is one approach to this area of study that will motivate students toward improved race-ethnic relations.[9] "Ylla" can be employed as a one-hour lesson plan, or as a unit, depending upon the amount of time spent on race-ethnic relations.

Analysis of "Ylla"

"Ylla" is the story of a jealous Martian husband named Yll, and his Martian wife, Ylla. Although there is some action in the story, the meaning and impact come through the carefully crafted dialogue. What is intriguing about this story is its three dominate race-ethnic themes: (1) The husband's jealousy over his wife's telepathic vision

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[9]Ray Bradbury, The Martian Chronicles (New York: Bantam, 1974), pp. 14-27.

of a spaceman from Earth named Nathaniel York, and his revulsion at the thought of his wife falling in love with an alien. (2) The husband's fear of contact and communication with a creature from an inferior race. (3) The wife's role as a typical Martian woman and as a minority figure in the male hierarchy of Mars. These three themes run concurrently, bound together like a tightly-knit spider's web. Yll settles the perplexing problem to his personal satisfaction: he shoots and kills the stranger from Earth. It is open to conjecture whether or not Yll communicates with Nathaniel York prior to killing him. The story concludes with the wife knowing but being unable to say anything, only attempting to hum a beautiful song she has learned from the earthling's thoughts. Yll assures her she will be better tomorrow, and accepting the situation as it is, Ylla cries softly and agrees with her husband.

"Ylla" makes a poignant commentary on the question of race-ethnic relations from the perspective of what they may be on another world. This story, like all of Ray Bradbury's fiction, deals with universal themes and universal problems. Taken in another context, this story might also deal with the Vietnamese relocation situation, black civil rights, American Indian rights or Chicano rights. Yet, Bradbury has carefully constructed the story in such a manner that the three themes of race-ethnic relations becomes universal and interstellar in their far-reaching implications. Bradbury, as a master storyteller, excells in "Ylla"; this is due in part to his concern for improved race-ethnic relations. Students will be attracted to "Ylla" because it appeals to their interest in outer space and allows them to use their imaginations in reaching solutions to the problems faced by the characters in the story.

Teacher Lesson Plan Questions for "Ylla"

The possibilities of "Ylla" serving as a focal point for class discussion are numerous. A sociology teacher may decide to bring into the discussion comparisons with other minority groups such as the treatment of the American Indian. A teacher might ask the questions:

(1) Had Yll been an American Indian, what would his perspective be when he encounters a white explorer in the wilderness? Under these circumstances, would Yll react the same way as in the story? What could happen? Are there alternatives to the outcome?

(2) Is it possible that Ylla could change the outcome through some action on her part, or would her role in a male-dominated society prevent her from doing anything?

(3) Would Yll attempt communication with this alien?

(4) Must Yll destroy something different from himself, or should he first investigate?

(5) If you were in Yll's place, what would you do?

(6) If you were in Ylla's place, what would you do?

(7) If you were in York's place, what would you do?

(8) As an outside observer, what could you do or say to each of the characters to make a difference?

(9) How has governmental policy harmed or helped the American Indian? In what ways have race-ethnic relations with the American Indian improved, and in what ways have they not improved?

Information and Concept Testing for "Ylla"

Testing on the story, "Ylla," like the discussion questions, should prove stimulating to both the sociology teacher and his students. Testing for information within the story will result in multiple choice, true-false, or short identification questions, whereas testing for concepts will result in essay and objective questions. Essay

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questions of the following design could be considered:

(1) Could Yll be persuaded to follow a different course of action than he does in the story? How would you persuade him?

(2) What would you say to Yll to convince him that York is only a stranger in a strange land and means him no harm?

(3) What actions could Ylla take to save York's life while at the same time protecting herself?

(4) On a psychological level, are American Indians treated any differently today than they were one-hundred years ago? Why or why not?

(5) Does justice prevail in race-ethnic relations today? Why or why not?

A sociology teacher will know if he is successful only when the response to the test indicates that his students have grasped the significance of what lies behind improving race-ethnic relations, and are motivated to express it adequately in their own words.

"Ylla" is one approach to the study of race-ethnic relations. The story contains the three dominate race-ethnic themes: alien, inferior race, and minority figure. "Ylla" makes a poignant commentary on the question of race-ethnic relations from the perspective of what they may be on another world. Students will be attracted to this story because of their interest in outer space, and because the story allows them to become involved in reaching solutions to the problems faced by these space-age characters. Testing and discussion questions on the story should prove stimulating to both teacher and students.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Motivating students in the classroom became a key theme in the social studies curriculum during the 1970's, and the search for approaches to overcome a lack of motivation continues to the present. Because approaches to motivating students involve the cognitive and affective domains, and are open to interpretation by differing groups, conflicts emerge between groups with opposing viewpoints. One approach to motivating students is the use of science fiction in the classroom.

The first major effort to utilize science fiction in the social studies classroom appears in 1973. Science fiction material is being successfully integrated into the social studies curriculum to motivate students. Science fiction anthologies continue to be adapted to the social studies curriculum due to the popularity of the genre.

As an integral part of the social studies curriculum, sociology requires more attention in regard to the selection of an adequate science fiction work that will adapt well to topics taught in a twelfth grade sociology class. The conceptual material found in a high school sociology textbook is not always exciting and stimulating to read, but with a science fiction work that supplements this conceptual material, the motivation for learning can increase. One possible approach is to use Ray Bradbury's novel, The Martian Chronicles, in the sociology classroom. The story, "Ylla," taken from the novel, can serve as a

motivational approach to presenting race-ethnic relations to a twelfth grade sociology class.

"Ylla" is one approach to the study of race-ethnic relations from the perspective of what they may be on another world. This story incorporates the three dominate race-ethnic themes into its structure: alien, inferior race, and minority figure. Bradbury, as a master storyteller, excells in this story; this is due in part to his interest in sociology and concern for improved race-ethnic relations. Discussion and test questions illustrate ways to motivate students. A sociology teacher will know success only when the response to evaluation indicates that students have grasped the significance of what lies behind improving race-ethnic relations, and are motivated to express it in their own words.

As a possible motivational approach, Bradbury's novel, may be considered a possible supplemental work, along with the traditional textbook, to be used in the teaching of a twelfth grade sociology class. Chronicles is an optimistic work, offering alternatives and answers to the problems that confront today's society. It suggests, too, that in the final analysis, humankind will persevere and realize its potential despite those problems.

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APPENDIX A

SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGIES: RESOURCE CHECKLIST

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APPENDIX C

RAY BRADBURY LETTER

Dear H.L.Prosser:

I wish I could correspond at length, but 300 letters a week prevent, all to be answered by me, personally - no secretary ever in my life.
I am enclosing some materials which I hope will help. I also suggest that you read the latter chapters of my novel SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES available in paperback from BANTAM, where there is a discussion of good and evil in the library, late at night. Okay? Good luck and best from yours, with thanks,

RAY BRADBURY

Date of letter: February 8, 1982

Legal Name: Harold Lee Prosser

Birth: December 31, 1944 at 7:04 pm in Springfield, Missouri, U. S. A.

Parents: Mother - Marjorie Hart; Step-father - Frank L. Hart (deceased).

Married: November 4, 1971 in California to Grace Eileen Wright.

Children: Rachael Maranda (b. 5/10/75) and Rebecca Dawn (b. 6/21/79). Both daughters born in Springfield, Missouri.

General Background: Writer and book reviewer since 1963. Fourteen listings in biographical works. Tutor in English to minorities and underprivileged while living in California, 1968-69; tutor in English and social studies, 1981-82.

Locale Background: Lived in Santa Monica Canyon, California during the 1960's; lived in Oregon and Wyoming during 1971; has lived in Missouri from 1972 to present.

Publications to date, as of August, 1982: 801.

Achievements/Honors: Manuscripts and papers are permanently housed and stored at the Archive of Contemporary History, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Catalog title: The H. L. Prosser Collection.

Educational Background: A. A. degree, English; Santa Monica College, 1968. Writing studies, California State University at Northridge, 1968-69 - studied Advanced Narrative Writing under American novelist Paul Bowles. B. S. degree, Sociology; Southwest Missouri State University, 1974. Graduate studies in Social Sciences (Sociology and History), 1981 - present, SMSU.

Publications: (Since 1973)

Dandelion Seeds: Eighteen Stories (Angst World Library, 1974); The Capricorn and other fantasy stories (Angst World Library, 1974; The Day of the Grunion and other stories (Mafdet Press; W. D. Firestone, Publ., 1977); Goodbye, Lon Chaney, Jr., Goodbye (Mafdet Press; W. D. Firestone, Publ., 1978) - novelette; Summer Wine (W. D. Firestone Press, 1979); The Alien and other poems of Christian Mysticism (Old River Road Press, 1980); among others. Recent articles: "American Fantasy Literature" and "Paul Bowles" (Salem Press, Inc., 1981); "Jack London as a Fantasy Writer: A Brief Overview" (Echoes, 1981); "The Short Fantasy Fiction of Clark Ashton Smith" (Salem Press, Inc., 1982); among others. Pending publications include "Teaching Sociology with Ray Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles,""Christian Mysticism," "Edgar Allan Poe was Murdered!," "American Horror Literature," among others. 205 book reviews published since 1972. Work-in-progress includes A Gathering of Secret Places: Autobiographical Sketches, "Themes in the Religious Life of the American Indian," "Robert Bloch's Fiction: An Analysis," among others.

Interests: Tennis, swimming, gardening, reading, photography, sociology of religion, Christian Mysticism, Native American and Mesoamerican studies, Edgar Allan Poe, Jack London, American Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature.